1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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When a Nuer speaks of a person having stolen (*kwal*) an animal, he means that he has taken it without permission and by stealth and by no means implies that he ought not to have taken it. Within a tribe an abductor of cattle always considers that he is taking what is owing to him. It is a debt (*ngwal*) which he is settling in this way, because the man who owes him cattle has not repaid them of his own accord. The legal issue, therefore, is whether he is right in assuming a debt and whether he should have taken the particular animals he took. So well is this practice of helping yourself to what is owing to you an established habit, that it may be said to be a customary way of settling debts. Thus the final cattle of a homicide-payment are often seized in the pastures, and it often happens that when a bridegroom and his kin do not hand over all the cattle they have promised, the wife's brothers try to seize the animals still owing to them. In other circumstances a man will steal a cow which he is owed, sometimes employing the services of a magician to charm the owner so that he may not guard his herd on the day the theft is planned; for example a man who lent another an ox for sacrifice in sickness, at his daughter's wedding, in time of famine, and so on, and has not received a heifer in return, although the debtor possesses one. Having seized a cow from the debtor's herd he is quite willing to return it if he receives instead the heifer owing to him. The debtor will then either try to steal his cow back again or he will open a discussion which will result in his paying a heifer and receiving back his cow.

The only quarrels within a village or camp about ownership of cattle that I have witnessed have concerned obligations of kinship or affinity and have eventually been settled by one party giving way on account of his relationship to the other. If a man seizes cattle from a kinsman or neighbour he walks into his kraal and takes them. If the owner has a strong case he may resist: otherwise he lets the cattle go, for he knows that the man will be supported by public opinion in the community. If a man seizes cattle from a man of a different village he adopts different tactics. With one or two friends he watches the cattle in their grazing-ground till a suitable opportunity occurs. I have never heard of a Nuer stealing a cow from a fellow tribesman merely because he wanted one. He has, on the other hand, no hesitation in stealing cows from persons belonging to neighbouring tribes and will even go with friends to another tribe in order to steal from them. This theft (*kwal*) is not considered in any way wrong.

If a man commits adultery he pays an indemnity of five cows and an ox, unless the man is impotent, when the adulterer can

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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Numbers of Cattle sold in or exported from Malakal in Yearly Totals from 1935 to 1947 Inclusive

1935	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947
2,586	2,413	1,590	2,385	2,817	2,116	2,283	3,124	2,204	3,012	5,944	5,380	5,278[1]

When it is remembered that the Nuer alone possess over half a million head of cattle, these sales figures are not impressive, but the increase in sales is significant.

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There is still relatively little internal trade in cattle among the Nuer. Cattle are not bought and sold in local markets, and disputes over prices or payment rarely come before the courts. Cattle continue to be exchanged, however, and there are still customary rates of exchange.

Exchanges and Loans

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The Nuer word for exchange is *gual*, and is used specifically in connexion with the exchange of cattle. '*Ce thak gual ke dou*', 'he exchanged a bull for a cow-calf.' The expression, which is often loosely applied, refers to a direct exchange. In some cases cattle may be exchanged for sheep. It is generally recognized that a large bull or ox is worth a cow-calf, and a cow-calf is worth anything from 10–20 sheep. Such transactions are frequent.[2] In certain situations of spiritual danger—famine, sickness, or death—or in any situation which demands a sacrifice, a sacrificial animal is necessary, and this may not be immediately available. In such circumstances a man will be forced to make an immediate exchange: a cow-calf for a bull-calf, and so on. More probably he will borrow a bull or in some cases a ram on the understanding that he will pay the owner its recognized equivalent at some later date. This is in the nature of a loan, and involves some measure of interest. A full-grown ox is worth at least a cow-calf if the debt is discharged at some later date, a ram is worth a bull-calf, and so on. In this case the word *ngual* is usually employed. The word *ngual* implies the passage of time before the transaction is complete, and is thus best translated as 'loan'.

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In many cases a Nuer will specify beforehand that he will pay the first cow-calf born to such and such a cow. Such loans are a frequent cause of litigation, for a man is often unwilling to repay the loan after his immediate need has been met, or unable to do so.

[1] Jonglei Investigation Team, *Third Interim Report*, 1948, p. 20.

[2] Among some Nuer and Dinka tribes there is a considerable trade in this manner with Baggara Arabs from the north. Cow-calves are brought in by the latter and exchanged for large oxen, which are then driven north and sold in the markets. This form of trade is, however, limited, for it seems that Baggara cattle will not survive in the areas south of approximately latitude 9°, and though the Nuer have been tempted to try, the experiment has usually been unsuccessful. In any case, there are no statistics available because the practice is not encouraged by the Government owing to the spread of disease.

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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Disputes are easily settled by the courts, though execution of judgement is often slow.

Loans Arising from the Institution of Nak

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Slightly different situations arise from the institution known as '*nak*'.[1] It appears probable that *nak*—the common word meaning 'to kill', but in this context meaning 'a slaughter'—was part of the tribal ceremonies concerned with the division of age-sets. Age-mates of the younger age-set would segregate themselves from the rest of the community at the cattle-byre of one of their number and live entirely on the meat of oxen slaughtered for the occasion.

Two or three of the youths would club together to provide an ox and, if their immediate relatives were unable to supply one, they would appropriate one from someone else. In this they were given considerable licence and, should the owner object, they could seize it with impunity. Public opinion would not allow the owner to resist, and certainly he would be unable nowadays to obtain immediate redress in the courts. In return, the youths are bound by convention, with the full force of public opinion behind it, to make return after a specified number of years (usually announced by the *wut ghok*).

The exchange values of cattle provided in this manner are much higher than those recognized in normal exchanges or loans. They are:

1 large bull=2 cow-calves and 1 bull-calf.
1 medium bull=2 cow-calves.
1 bull-calf=1 cow-calf.

The debts were not, of course, discharged with the rigidity which these rates imply, but they are quoted by Nuer as being traditional. Just as a man is expected to hand over his ox without show of reluctance in the first place, so would his debtors be expected to discharge their obligations without argument. Nuer are particularly emphatic on this point, but disputes are, none the less, frequently taken to court.

Nearly all these exchanges are necessary to meet some ritual situation, and are therefore of frequent occurrence. Sacrifice is extremely common, and Nuer consume more meat than is commonly supposed. Recent statistics indicate that a large proportion of the total cattle population is slaughtered.[2]

Exchange of Cattle for Grain

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Finally, cattle are sometimes exchanged for grain in times of famine. This has not been so frequent in recent years, because grain, imported

[1] I have discussed this institution in more detail in an article, 'The Age-set System and the Institution of 'Nak' among the Nuer', *S.N.R.*, 1948.
[2] See Jonglei Investigation Team, *Progress Report, 1948–9*.

9:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1936 FJ22 Nuer FJ22

According to Jackson, after the wounds have completely healed the boys go into camp. He says that a group of about a hundred boys is formed and that a bull is provided for each of them. They settle in a spot about an hour's distance from the village and gorge themselves with meat. A young boy or an old woman cooks for them but they may not be visited by girls. During this time they indulge in feats of endurance and when they have eaten all the bullocks they return to their villages.[1] This account by Jackson is not entirely in accord with my own information which does not lead me to consider these camps as part of the institution of age-sets (*ric*) but as only incidentally associated with it. According to my information the newly initiated boys do not always collect in camps after their wounds have healed but only in some years, about every second year, and then it is not only the new initiates who form a camp but also members of their age-set who have been initiated in previous years and even members of senior age-sets. I was told that even a married man would attend and that a man would attend until his son was old enough to replace him. I think that these camps (called *ndk* or *kanar*) are a custom separate from the age-set system, though related to it by the fact that its members are mostly recruited from the unmarried youths of the village and are hence mainly of the same age-set. These camps are also held, moreover, during the closed periods when "the knife is hung up" and no further initiation is allowed to take place. They are held when the first harvest, the *beel wec*, is ripe. Any youth who possesses a bullock, other than his favourite beast (*dil thakde*), will take it to the *kal*, as these camps are also called, in general with all camps which are without cows and the ordinary activities of pastoral life. A youth will ask his father to give him a bullock so that he may join his comrades at their feasts, and if his father has no beast to spare and his son is insistent in his request he will arrange for him to share a bullock with a friend and will later pay the owner a male calf for the half which is lent to his son. The young men spend a month, or even two months, in the camp, living mainly on meat, for a bullock is killed every three days or so. Nevertheless they also eat a quantity of porridge, since women in the neighbourhood of the camp, which is generally five to ten miles from the homes of the youths, will make porridge and will bring it to the camp to exchange for meat. The skin of slaughtered bullocks and some parts of the meat are taken back to the village for the older men. Apart from eating meat and indulging in the pursuits incidental to this season of the year, especially

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 146-147.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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SPIRITS OF THE ABOVE

× 776 782 231 ●426 To appreciate how Nuer get into such difficulties with their dedicated cattle as I have mentioned we must bear in mind the overwhelming importance of cattle in their lives, that cattle are generally the issue in disputes, and that almost every Nuer owes cattle and has cattle owing to him, debts which are often not settled, if at all, for years and sometimes even for generations. Nuer will go to almost any lengths to obtain cattle to which they think they have a right and to put off the settlement of their own debts. It is not surprising that in these circumstances a man may postpone fulfilling his obligation to a spirit if it is a question of having to choose between the claims of an importunate creditor and of a spirit which, it is hoped, will be satisfied for the time being with the man's good intention; or that to fulfil an unavoidable obligation to a kinsman a man may take a liberty with a spirit which, he hopes, will not take offence at a fault in such compelling circumstances.

× 776 782 Besides dedicating a cow to his spirit and sacrificing an ox, sheep, or goat to it when it is displeased, a Nuer ought now and again to hold a ceremony in its honour. This generally takes place after the harvest has been gathered in and there is plenty of beer. I attended one of these ceremonies in the home of Karlual, who figured in the story of Galuak's sickness which I have just related. It was held in honour of *deng*, who is what the Nuer call *kwoth ciengde* or *kwoth goale*, the spirit of his home or of his family. I was told that each of Karlual's numerous brothers holds a like ceremony in turn till it is his turn to hold it again. The ceremony of the year before had been on a large scale and an ox had been sacrificed at it. *Deng* had afterwards told Karlual through the mouth of someone who had become possessed by it that all it wanted this year was some beer, so the ceremony I witnessed was on a smaller scale. It is known as 'the bathing of the cow in beer'.

The ceremony was held in the morning and was very late in starting because those who attended it, or some of them, had first attended a ceremony of the same kind elsewhere in the village, that held by a man called Mokwac for the spirit of his concubine's dead husband. When I arrived at Karlual's homestead I found that a gourdful of beer had been placed at the side of a clump of grass at the edge of the kraal. Karlual's brothers and their families

intention is to sacrifice it in the near future, the dedication being in the nature of a consecration for sacrifice.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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equal value by the persons concerned in the exchange, as when a man who is leaving his neighbourhood exchanges his old byre for a bull calf or when a man exchanges an ox with certain markings desired by his partner to the exchange for one with his own favourite markings. The difference between *kok* and *luel* is that between the reciprocal relation between persons in an exchange and equivalence of objects exchanged. In either case the action is immediate, unlike that implied by use of the words *ngual*, to borrow, and *gwal*, to lend. In loans a man makes a gift and the recipient later returns it or something of greater value. There are two distinct and separate movements between which there is a long passage of time. In its piacular context, therefore, the word *luel* means that the life of the victim is exchanged in the moment of its immolation for the life of a man. In the sacrificial situation the two things are of equal value, so that the one can be substituted for the other. This puts men and cattle in a very peculiar relationship to each other, a matter I discuss in Chapter X.

In personal and piacular sacrifices the animals are substitutions for men. To this extent sacrifice is an exchange, but it is also something very much more than just a simple exchange. It is not a simple idea at all but a very complex one in which many other elements are present. I discuss the problem in more general terms later, but we may here note how other terms are used to describe personal sacrifices which emphasize rather the related ideas of propitiation, expiation, atonement, and purification.

Sometimes the word *lor* is used to describe a sacrifice. The word means 'to go to meet', perhaps its most common usage being to describe the formal greeting that Nuer, especially women, make to a visitor of importance when they go from their homes to receive him outside their homestead or village. The word has therefore the further sense of 'to honour', as would appear to be the case also in Dinka and other Nilotic tongues. But in the religious sense of the word people go out of their villages to meet a plague or other danger not with the purpose of bringing it to their homes to give it hospitality there but with the opposite purpose of preventing it from entering their homes. They go out to meet and stay a plague or murrain with sacrifice. They say '*bane je luor*', 'let us go out to meet it'. The well-known prophet Ngundeng of the Lou tribe did this in times of epidemics, sometimes, I was told, sacrificing dozens of oxen and leaving their carcasses in